REMARKS

Claims 2-7, 9-16, 18-21, and 24-33 are pending in this application. Claims 1, 8, 17, and 23 were previously canceled and claim 22 is canceled herein. Claims 4, 7, 9, 12, 13, 20, 21, 24, and 33 have been amended herein. In view of these amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of the claims.

Claims 2-7, 9, 12-16, 18-22, 24, and 27-33 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being obvious over U.S. Patent No. 6,071,809 to Zhao. However, each of the independent claims 9, 12, 24, and 33 have been amended such that they clearly define over the Zhao reference.

More specifically, each of the independent claims now require a plurality of first apertures (vias) and a plurality of second apertures (for conductive lines) that are contiguous with each other. As stated in Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary (Second Edition) contiguous is defined as "touching; meeting or joining at the surface or border; close together; neighboring; bordering or adjoining". Zhao simply does not teach "openings or apertures" for conductive lines in a first insulating layer that are contiguous with vias or second openings in a second insulating layer. Furthermore, the trenches that define the conductive lines 304 in dielectric 306 never exist as openings or apertures that can be contiguous with the apertures or openings filled by the metal 330.

Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that each of the independent claims 9, 12, 24, and 33 do now clearly define over all references of record, whether considered singly or in combination and are patentable. Consequently, all of the dependent claims are also patentable for depending from a claim now deemed allowable or for their own limitations.

PAGE 11/12 * RCVD AT 9/6/2005 4:56:01 PM [Eastern Daylight Time] * SVR:USPTO-EFXRF-6/27 * DNIS:2738300 * CSID:9727329218 * DURATION (mm-ss):02-18

In view of the above, Applicants respectfully submit that the application is in condition for allowance and request that the Examiner pass the case to issuance. If the Examiner should have any questions, Applicants request that the Examiner please contact Applicants' attorney at the address below. In the event that the enclosed fees are insufficient, please charge any additional fees required to keep this application pending, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 50-1065.

Respectfully submitted,

6 Sept 2005
Date

James C. Kesterson
James C. Kesterson
Attorney for Applicant
Reg. No. 25,882

Slater & Matsil, L.L.P.
17950 Preston Rd., Suite 1000
Dallas, Texas 75252-5793
Tel. 972-732-1001
Fax: 972-732-9218